request for equity infusion is under consideration of the Government. A Committee of Secretaries set up under the Chairmanship of Cabinet Secretary will review the progress made by the Airline towards operational and financial restructuring.

Increase in helicopter crashes

†3356. SHRI AMIR ALAM KHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that there has been increase in the incidents of helicopter crashes in different parts of the country during last year;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the number of cases of helicopter crashes which have come to the notice during the last two years;

(d) whether all these cases have been investigated; and

(e) the steps being taken by Government to prevent these crashes?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) No, Sir.

(c) Three helicopter crashes were reported in 2007 and two in 2008.

(d) and (e) All accidents reported are investigated as per prescribed procedures and preventive action taken on the basis of the recommendations emanating from the investigation to avoid the recurrence of similar accident. A Helicopter Cell is working in Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) to look after safe helicopter operations and other requirements.

Contract to Pawan Hans Helicopters by ONGC

†3357. SHRI MOTILAL VORA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) has awarded a contract to Pawan Hans Helicopters to hire twelve helicopters for a period of three years;

(b) whether advanced security measures have to be deployed in these helicopters which were supposed to be completed within 150 days starting from 29 July, 2006;

(c) whether it is also a fact that first three helicopters were to be given in November, 2006 and remaining helicopters were to be given in July, 2007;

(d) the reasons for not carrying out the work by Pawan Hans Helicopters on time; and

(e) the total loss incurred by Pawan Hans due to this delay?

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) to (c) On 1.3.2006 Pawan Hans Helicopters Limited (PHHL) entered into a contract with Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) Ltd. to deploy 12 Dauphin Helicopters, complaint with Aviation Standard – 4 (AS-4) requirement, by 29.07.2006. However due to delay in making these helicopters AS-4 complaint, ONGC agreed to extend the time limit upto 31.07.2007. PHHL deployed the required number of AS-4 complaint helicopters by 31.12.2007.

(d) These Dauphin Helicopters needed major retrofitment by the manufacturer to make them AS-4 complaint and subsequent certification by the French Regulatory Authorities before being deployed with ONGC.

(e) ONGC deducted liquidated damages Rs. 14.94 crore from the charter hire charges due to PHHL for the delay. The same has been contested by PHHL because such delay had occurred due to circumstances beyond the control of PHHL and ONGC has not suffered any operational loss as PHHL continued to provide helicopters under old contract.

Plan for VRS/ERS in Civil Aviation Sector

3358. SHRI SHYAMAL CHAKRABORTY: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of employees working in the civil aviation sector; and

(b) whether Government has any plan of retrenchment/Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) Early Retirement Scheme (ERS) for them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) There are approximately 52,042 employees working in the civil aviation sector in the attached/autonomous/public sector organisations under this Ministry.

(b) There are no such proposals in the above organisations.

Status of Shri Biju Patnaik International Airport

3359. SHRIMATI RENUBALA PRADHAN: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) what is the present status of Shri Biju Patnaik International Airport at Bhubaneswar;

(b) the figure of air passengers who travelled through Shri Biju Patnaik International Airport in the last three years, year-wise; and

(c) by when this airport named after this freedom fighter would get all facilities like Delhi/Mumbai/Kolkata/Chennai airports?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (c) Biju Patnaik Airport at Bhubaneswar is one of the 35 non-metro airports taken up for development and upgradation to international standards. At this airport, construction of a New